

REMARKS

Claims 3–6, 8–10, 12–25, and 27–34 were presented for examination. In the action mailed on December 22, 2003, claims 12 and 15–25 are rejected, claims 3–6, 8–10, 13, and 14 are objected to, and claims 27–34 are allowed. In order to move prosecution forward to allowance, and without prejudice to Applicants' rights to later pursue the claims in this or any other related application, Applicants hereby cancel claims 12, 16, and 19–25. In addition, Applicants have amended claims 3 and 13 in accordance with the Examiner's suggestions in order to overcome the objections and rejections thereto. Claims 15 and 17 are amended to depend from Claim 13. Claims 14 and 27 are amended to correct typographical errors. Applicants therefore request reconsideration of the claims and the withdrawal of the pending objections and rejections.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that claims 27–34 are allowed. Applicants have made a minor amendment to claim 27 to correct a typographical error.

Amended Independent Claim 3 Is Non-Objectionable

As suggested by the Examiner, Applicants amend independent claim 3 to substitute letter designations for the previously included numeral designations in the claim. Applicants therefore submit that amended independent claim 3 is in condition for allowance. As dependent claims 4–6 and 8–10 are objected to based on their dependence on objected to base claim 3, Applicants submit that claims 4–6 and 8–10 are in condition for allowance, as well.

Amended Claim 13 Is In Condition For Allowance

The action objects to claims 13–14 on the basis that they depend on a rejected base claim. The action indicates that claims 13–14 would be allowable if they were amended to be written in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants amend claim 13 to rewrite it in independent form and to include the limitations of claim 12, thereby satisfying the Examiner's objection. Applicants further amend claims 15 and 17 to depend on amended claim 13. Applicants therefore submit that independent claim 13 and the claims that depend (directly or indirectly) upon it, i.e., claims 14–15 and 17–18, are in condition for allowance.

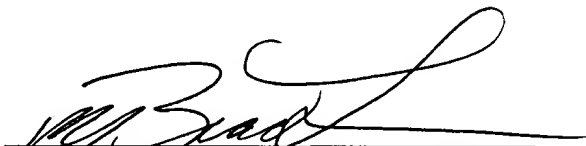
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants request reconsideration, withdrawal of all objections, and allowance of all of the pending claims in due course.

Respectfully submitted,

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